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# BACP Research Conference

May 11<sup>th</sup> & 12th 2018

# York St John University

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# Researching One's Own Clients: Rich Data from an Ethical Minefield

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## Workshop aims

- ✓ To encourage practitioners to become published researchers
- ✓ To demonstrate ways of conducting well designed case studies into clients' processes of psychological change





# Workshop plan

- Identifying the issues
- Exploring the issues
- Example of the research
- Questions & discussion

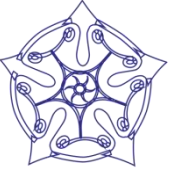


# The practitioner as researcher

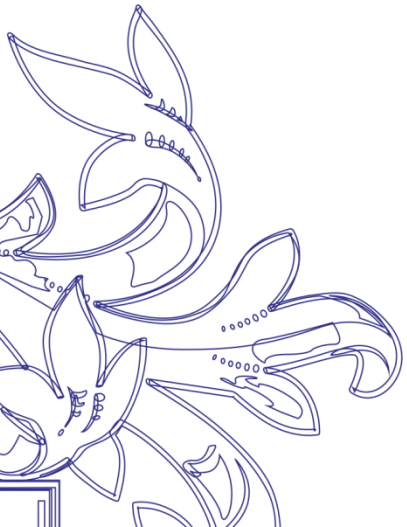
- Methodological implications
- Limitations
- Ethical standards

May we invite you to work in pairs, to identify the methodological pros, cons, limitations and ethical caveats of researching one's own clients?





# Feedback, discussion and key points arising from activity

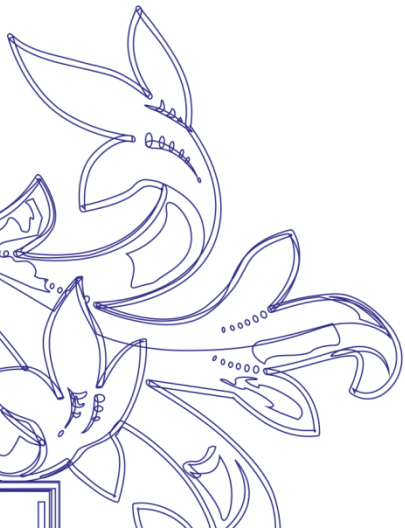






# The myth of objectivity

Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.32) suggested that in place of a fruitless search for objectivity the qualitative researcher strives for sensitivity

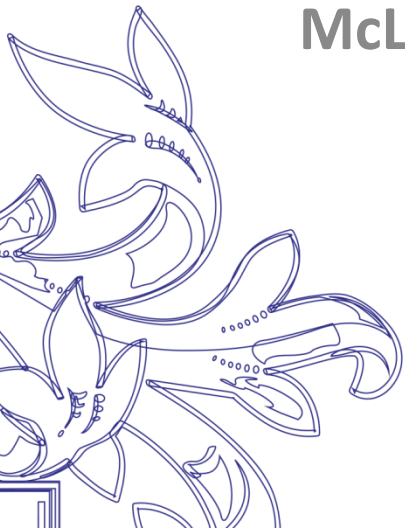




# Limiting subjective bias through researcher credibility

Credibility rather than objectivity. Credibility of the researcher is evaluated through assessing the researcher's reflexivity, honesty and openness.

McLeod (1994, p.99)

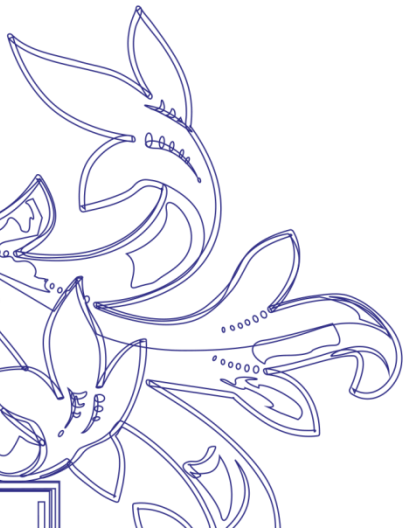




# Reliability

Iterative protocols, including sharing the case study with the client

Sharing data with others, including employing others to score transcript extracts





# Maintaining ethical practice

When is the client asked to give consent?

Who recruits the clients to the research?

How is ongoing consent monitored?

Supervision of the counsellor/researcher

Ethical mindfulness

(West, 2002, p. 267)







# Confidentiality and client protection

Coding of documentation

Care in published transcripts to disguise names and places

‘Bleeping out’ identifying words on recordings

Voice-changing software for if recordings are played to members of a research team.

Transport and storage of data





# The position of this work lies on a positivist/relativist continuum

Wilson, Gabriel and James (2014) write of other's exploration of the epistemological tension between positivism and postmodern relativism (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Rennie & Fergus, 2006). Glaser and Strauss (1967) have acknowledged how within a positivistic methodology there can be elements of relativism.





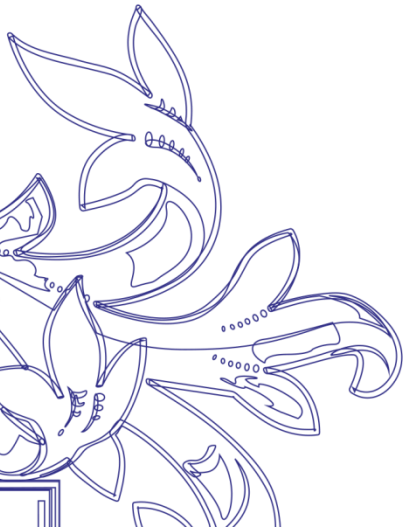
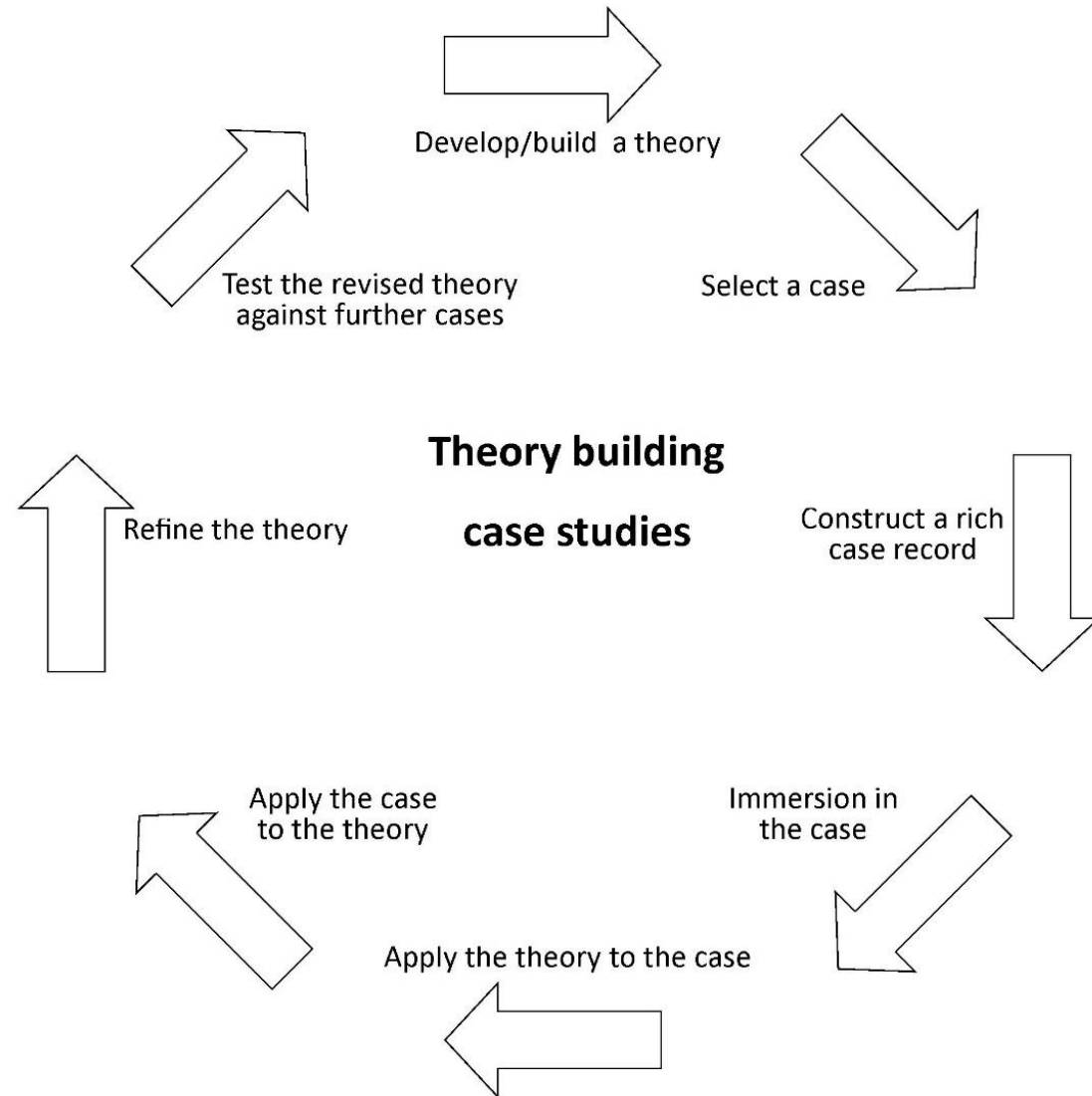
## **An epistemological approach: Cautious Positivism**

The reality inherent in observational methods of grief counselling research is derived from the experience of the client. At the same time, the focus, subjectivity and bias of the observer inevitably add a relativist dimension

**Wilson, Gabriel & James (2014)**



# Theory-building methodology (Stiles 2007)

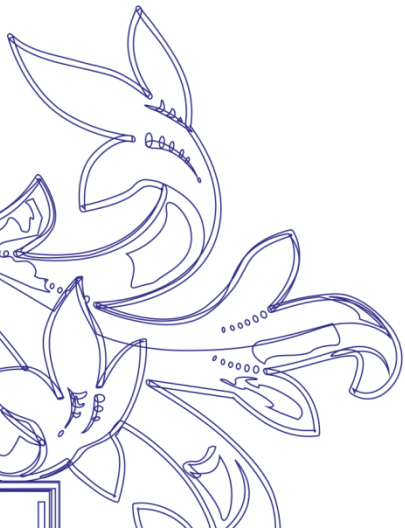




# Rapid transcription grid



Client code		File number	Date of session
343			27/2/2012
30.00	Thought he would be able to work through difficulties once he stopped work - glad he has been at home - even though not right - but working away had no home life. Saw no way out 31:50 32:15 (Big yawn) 'Brother hiding away' (32:50) Brother in Leicester		
33.00	Talked about CBT female practitioner 'very busy' - Felt it didn't work - not in a place to question it. Latest therapist could but methodology not right But discovered "More my dad" (than work/home stress)		
36.00	36:30 "Came out with tears" "Quite angry with it all" 37:30 Weary expression 'oh dear - I don't know' Me: If we could join up the dots, then you'll know. Client "Feel like I'm dragging something along"		
39.00	40:20 (Yawn) "Just feels too much to drag along" - Don't care - "Don't give a bloody toss" (40:46) "Hate that complete coldness inside me" Arguing, internal voices		

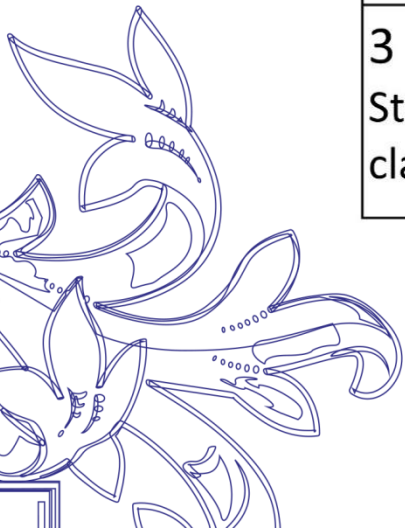


# Assimilation of Grief Experiences Scale AGES (Wilson 2017)



Stage	
0 Warded off	Numbness from pain. Dissociation from reality of death. Reluctance to abandon the body.
1 Unwanted thoughts	Reminders of the death are avoided. Unwilling to discuss the death. Pretence that relationship remains unchanged.
2 Vague awareness	Loss of identity and purpose. Distress when discussing the death. Magical thinking.
3 Problem Statement/clarification	Beginning of periods of respite from pain. Able to discuss the death, although usually upsetting. Rituals become less magical and more symbolic.

Developed from the Assimilation of Problematic Experiences Scale, APES (Stiles, 2001)

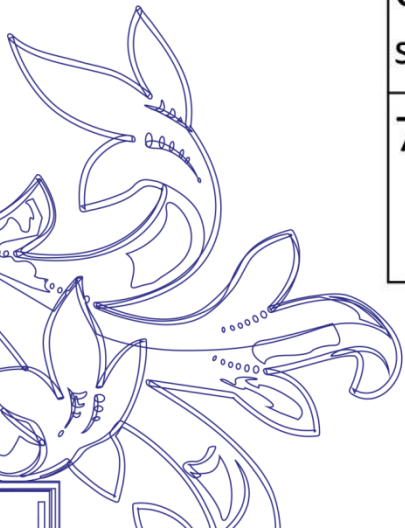


# Assimilation of Grief Experiences Scale

## AGES

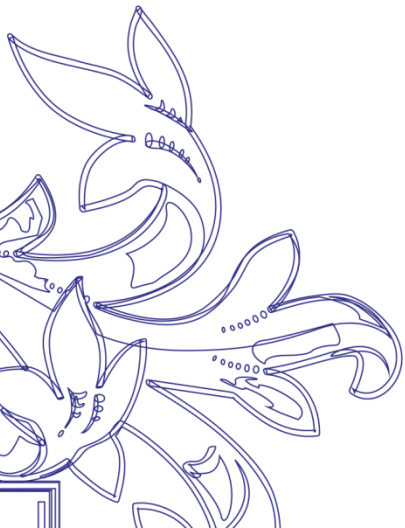


Stage	
4 Understanding/insight	Acceptance of the pain: 'going with the flow'. Greater understanding of circumstances surrounding death. Magical thinking diminishes. The deceased is relocated symbolically.
5 Application/working through	Comfortable oscillation between loss and restoration. Clearly discusses the death with reduced negative affect. Negotiation and renegotiation of relationship with deceased.
6 Problem solution	New meaning in life. New identity. May find meaning in the death. Fully symbolic continuing bond with deceased
7 Mastery	The bereavement is integrated into other life experiences. Resilience equips client for future losses. Open attitude to new close relationships.





The case study, one of a series of theory building studies, focused on the client rather than on either the practitioner or the therapeutic dyad







## The client

- ‘Sally’ was bereaved of her partner suddenly and traumatically. The peaceful death expected from his terminal cancer was pre-empted by an embolism which took him without warning and in the presence of his family.
- She was left with two sons still at school, and a daughter about to start university.
- Sally began working with her counsellor three months after the death, and saw him for 45 sessions spread over two years.



# The research method



- Sally's sessions were recorded and transcribed. Assimilation analysis was carried out on the transcriptions. Moments of assimilation were identified. These moments were scored against the AGES scale.
- In order to test the reliability of the analysis, twenty moments from the 45 transcriptions were randomly selected with a random number generator. Eighteen experienced bereavement practitioners were asked to allocate an AGES score to each extract. The data was analysed to determine the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient, using SPSS (IBM).

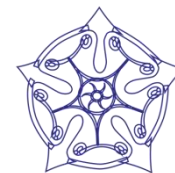


# Examples of moments of assimilation



- ❖ “I find myself Googling David’s name. Also I’ve been going over hospital letters which had discussed his diagnosis and prognosis”. AGES 2.4
- ❖ “I know I’m a mum and everything, but what’s the other bit of me doing? Do you know what I mean? Where do I go from here? (sobs) Don’t know, don’t know. I can’t see a plan”. AGES 3.2
- ❖ “Sometimes things will like trigger things. Like there’s a car parking outside and just for a fleeting second you just think ‘Oh David’s home’. It’s really weird. Just for a second”. AGES 4.5

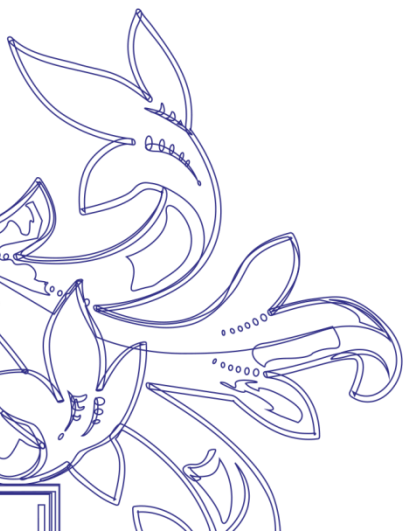




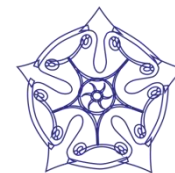
# The research – measuring reliability

Intraclass Correlation Coefficient																		
	Intraclass Correlation	95% Confidence Interval																
		Lower Bound	Upper Bound															
Single Measures	.613	.465	.777															
Average Measures	.966	.940	.984															

	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	Rater 6	Rater 7	Rater 8	Rater 9	Rater 10	Rater 11	Rater 12	Rater 13	Rater 14	Rater 15	Rater 16	Rater 17	Rater 18
Clip 1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	2
Clip 2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2.5	2	2	2
Clip 3	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	1	2
Clip 4	2	1	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2
Clip 5	4	5	3	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	6	4	5	3	7	4	4	5
Clip 6	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	1.5	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3
Clip 7	3	4	4	3	2	5	2	3	4	2	3	2	5	3	3	3	2	5
Clip 8	3	4	3	3	2	5	2	4	5	2	5	2	5	3	4.5	2	3	5
Clip 9	3	4	3	3	3	5	3	4	5	2	5	2	5	3	5	2	5	5
Clip 10	3	3	4	3	2	5	4	4	5	3	7	2	6	3	5	3	3	5
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Clip 12	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	6	4	7	4	4	4	4	4	3	5
Clip 13	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	6	4	7	4	4	4	4	4	4	6
Clip 14	4	6	5	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	4	7	5	5	6
Clip 15	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	5	6	3	5	3	4	5	2	4	2	5
Clip 16	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	5	6	4	7	4	6	5	6	5	5	6
Clip 17	5	6	6	5	6	6	7	6	6	5	7	4	6	6	5	6	4	6
Clip 18	5	5	6	5	5	6	7	6	4	4	7	1	4	5	5	5	5	4
Clip 19	6	6	6	5	5	6	7	6	6	5	7	2	5	6	3	5	3	5
Clip 20	6	7	7	6	5	6	7	6	6	5	7	5	7	6	6	4	5	5







# The research – measuring reliability

**Intraclass Correlation Coefficient**

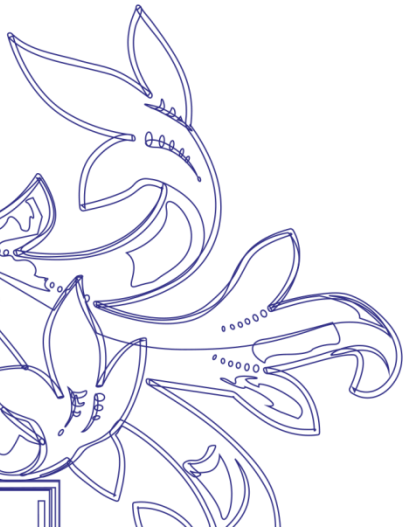
	Intraclass Correlation	95% Confidence Interval	
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	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	Rater 6	Rater 7	Rater 8	Rater 9	Rater 10
Clip 1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Clip 2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Clip 3	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	3	3

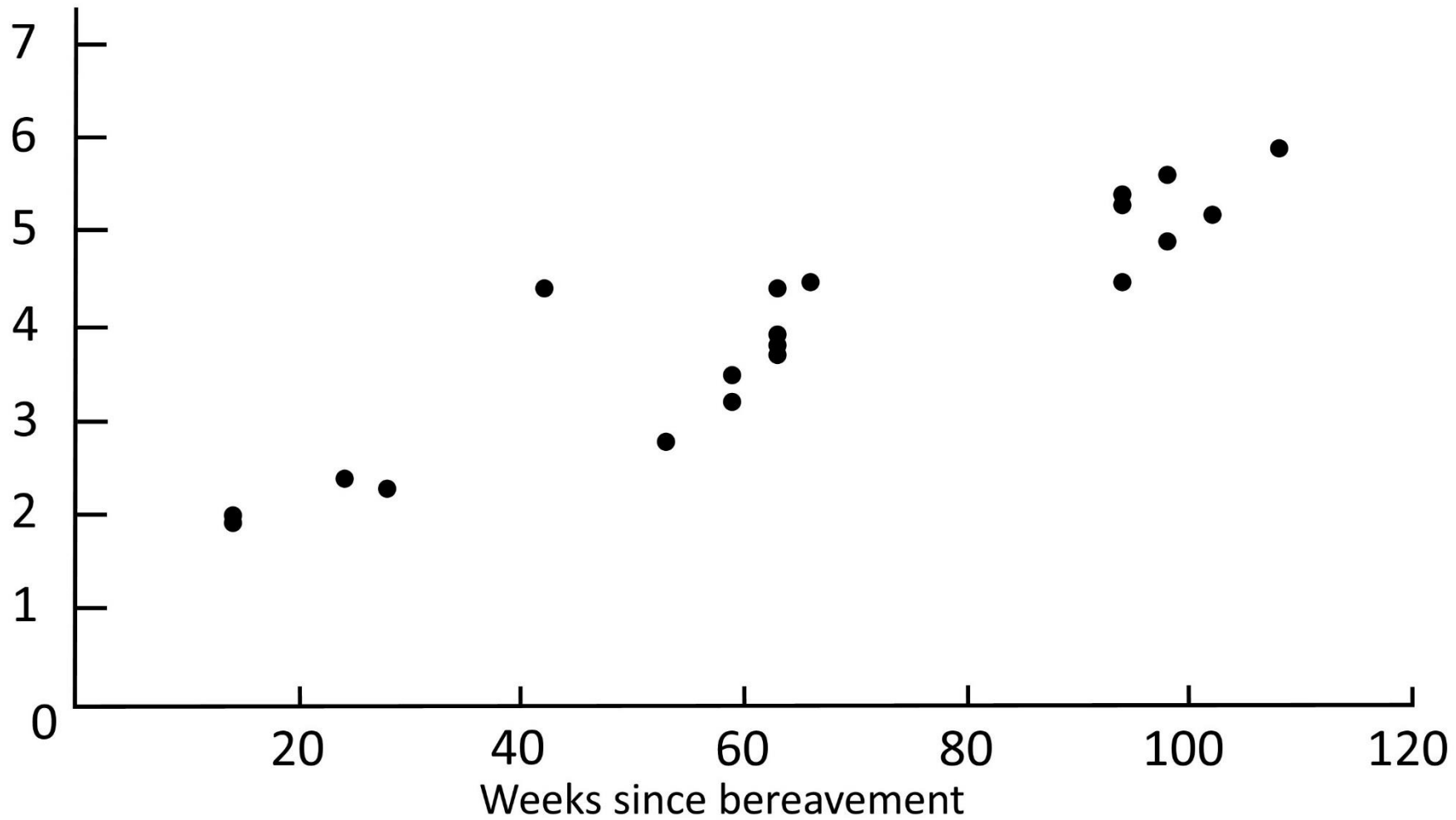


# Results

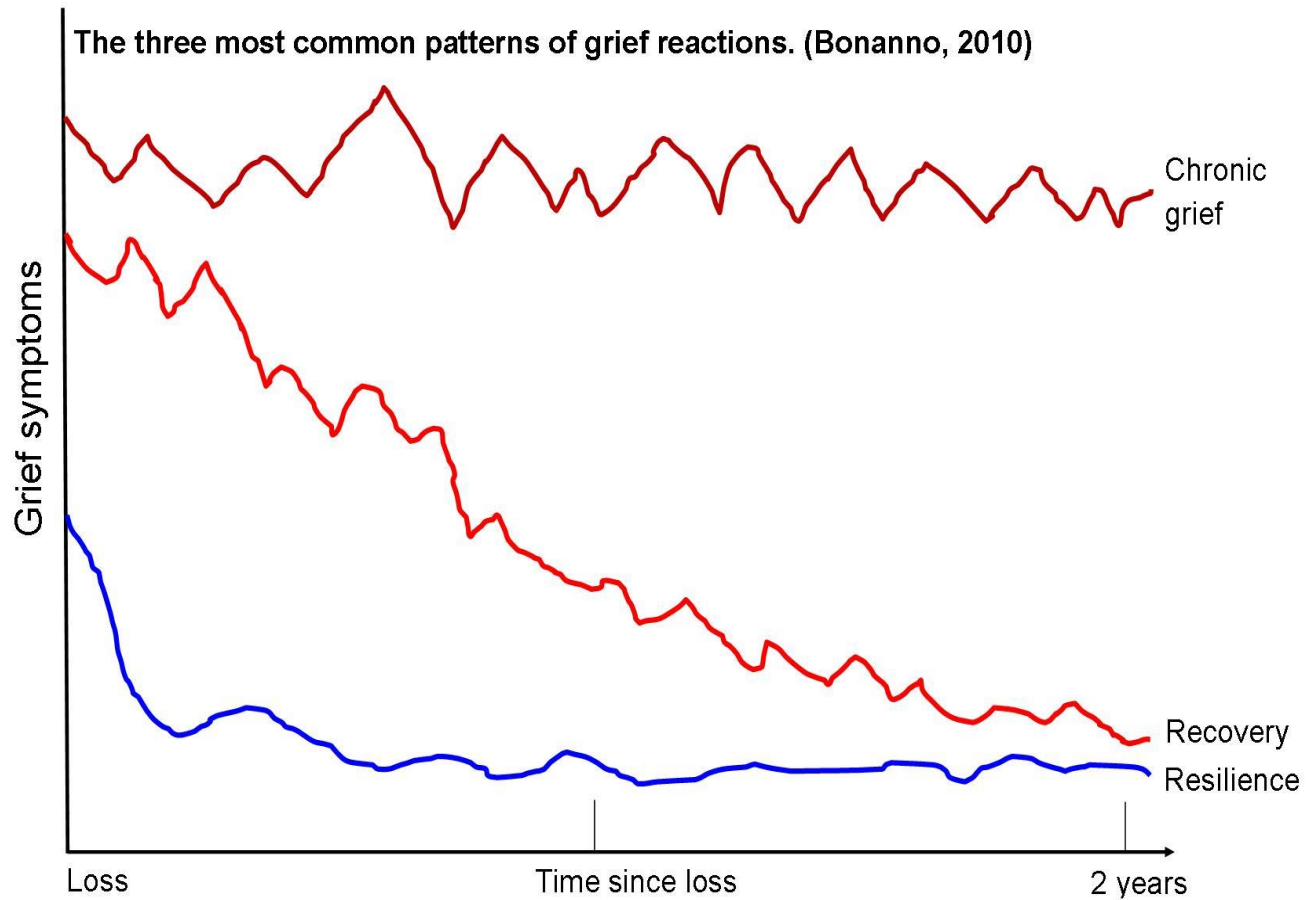
**Sally moved slowly but steadily through her grief journey. Her moments of assimilation matched the sequence predicted by AGES.**



AGES Score



# Compare this with trajectories of grief



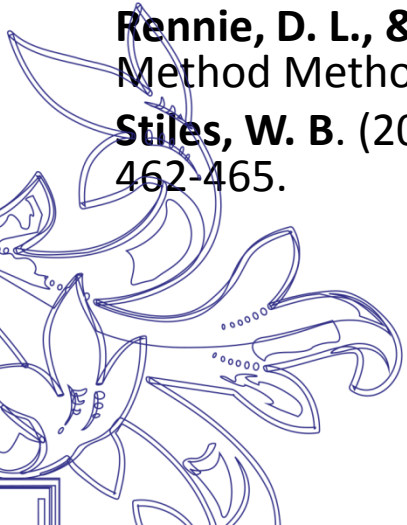


# Questions and concluding discussion

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